

RV BUSINESS

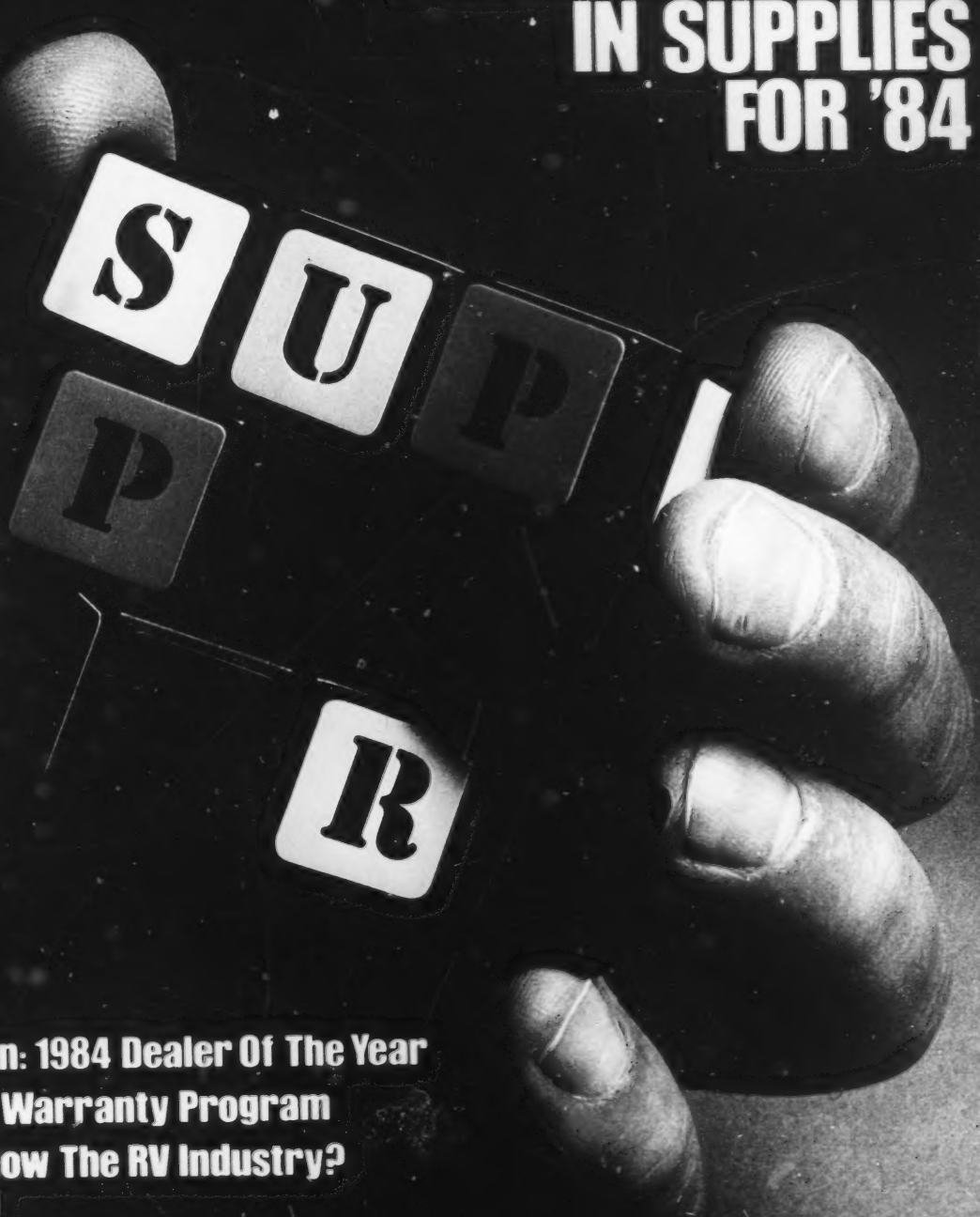
FROM THE EDITORS OF TL ENTERPRISES

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THE NEW TWISTS IN SUPPLIES FOR '84

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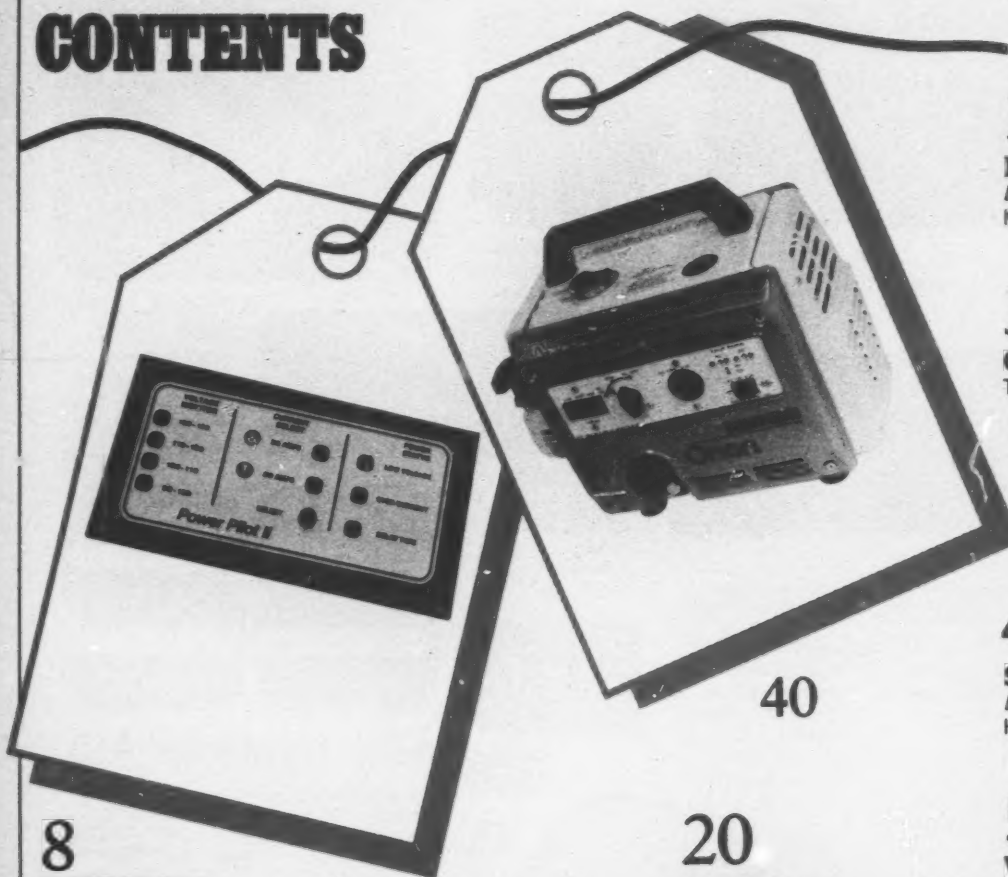
**Charles Dolan: 1984 Dealer Of The Year
Setting Up A Warranty Program
Think You Know The RV Industry?
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RV BUSINESS

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ON THE COVER: Supplier companies seem to be even more innovative than usual this year. As a result, the items available to the RV industry have new twists and turns. Our special feature examines the trend in RV supplies, with an overview of representative products starting on page 40. Photo by Hal Hunt.

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PERSPECTIVE

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members
GAYLORD MAXWELL

Reports from RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) show that retail sales diminished little during the final weeks of summer and the beginning of autumn. In fact, the number of units sold in September exceeded the total for August. The upswing that has been characteristic of the RV industry for the past year shows no sign of abating. In both dollars and units, September '83 was considerably better than the corresponding month in 1982. With the exception of used camping trailers, all categories are up. Used prices seem to be down somewhat, but they're still good. Some dealers are reporting excess used merchandise that they're willing to wholesale.

As might be expected at this time of the year when dealers are trying to reduce inventories to make room for new models, profits have dropped. Fewer dealers report excellent grosses for September. However, there were few who called them poor.

SALES VOLUME			
For Month	This year \$	6,918,658	+55%
	Last year \$	4,455,404	
Year to Date	This year	\$68,337,388	+49%
	Last year	\$45,872,619	

TOTAL UNIT SALES			
For Month	This year	535	+40%
	Last year	385	
Year to Date	This year	5619	+24%
	Last year	4516	

NEW UNIT SALES			
For Month	This year	322	+52%
	Last year	212	
Year to Date	This year	3629	+31%
	Last year	2788	

USED UNIT SALES			
For Month	This year	213	+23%
	Last year	173	
Year to Date	This year	1990	+15%
	Last year	1728	

MOTORHOMES

NEW	For Month	This year	93	+111%
		Last year	44	
	Year to Date	This year	933	+77%
		Last year	527	
USED	For Month	This year	72	+7%
		Last year	67	
	Year to Date	This year	671	+11%
		Last year	604	

Sales this September more than doubled last year's; coupled with a 77% increase for the year-to-date, it makes this RV type the front-runner in a real boom year. All indications are that the demand will continue.

The only dark cloud on the motorhome horizon is the number of people who are getting on the bandwagon. Business could get bloody very soon, and grosses might get too low for some dealerships.

TRUCK CAMPERS

NEW	For Month	This year	10	+25%
		Last year	8	
	Year to Date	This year	145	+19%
		Last year	122	
USED	For Month	This year	14	+56%
		Last year	9	
	Year to Date	This year	163	+12%
		Last year	146	

Unit numbers aren't very impressive, but the percentages are good. The larger camper dealers are still selling, but department stores with small camper inventories have gone flat.

CAMPING TRAILERS

NEW	For Month	This year	108	+64%
		Last year	72	
	Year to Date	This year	1371	+21%
		Last year	1137	
USED	For Month	This year	25	-7%
		Last year	27	
	Year to Date	This year	278	-2%
		Last year	285	

The season ended with a grand upsurge of new unit sales. The 64% upswing is the greatest monthly increase for the year. Good news.

The bad news is that profits were considerably off. The poor column got more votes this month than for any other month this year. Dealers didn't want to carry them over.

TRAVEL TRAILERS

NEW	For Month	This year	83	+26%
		Last year	66	
	Year to Date	This year	928	+18%
		Last year	788	
USED	For Month	This year	90	+41%
		Last year	64	
	Year to Date	This year	788	+24%
		Last year	635	

The strong upturn in trailers that began about midsummer continues. Apparently, the brighter economic picture is bringing families to dealers' lots.

Used units aren't faring as well in some areas, although overall sales haven't been bad. Profits have weakened on new units as old models are closed out.

FIFTH-WHEELS

NEW	For Month	This year	28	+27%
		Last year	22	
	Year to Date	This year	252	+18%
		Last year	214	
USED	For Month	This year	12	+100%
		Last year	6	
	Year to Date	This year	90	+55%
		Last year	58	

This type is still going strong although the market has apparently flattened out a bit. Snowbirds should be buying the new models in the next few weeks. The demand for used units is quite strong, but the supply is not great. Profits are rated good to excellent. Δ

SHIPMENTS

RVIA, SEPTEMBER

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during September 1983 was 28,400, up 52.7% from September of 1982.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco, Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

RV shipments were as follows in Sept. 1983		Sept. 1982	Percent Change	Cumu lative 1983	Cumu- lative 1982	Percent Change
TRAVEL TRAILERS	5800	4000	+45.0%	58,000	42,700	+35.8%
FIFTH- WHEELS	1700	1100	+55.0%	13,800	9,200	+50.0%
TRUCK CAMPERS	600	300	+100.0%	5900	4600	+28.3%
MULTI-USE VEHICLES	11,400	7900	+44.3%	117,200	83,700	+40.0%
TYPE A: MOTOR- HOMES	3000	1500	+100.0%	24,700	14,600	+69.2%
TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS	700	300	+133.3%	4100	3300	+24.2%
TYPE C: MINI MOTOR- HOMES	2400	1200	+100.0%	23,600	14,300	+65.0%
FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS	2800	2300	+21.7%	29,900	26,900	+11.6%
TOTALS	28,400	18,600	+52.7%	277,200	199,300	+39.1%